APPENDIX C

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT

STH 26
JANESVILLE TO WATERTOWN
ROCK, JEFFERSON, AND DODGE COUNTIES
PROJECT I.D. 1390-04-00

An Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) for project STH 26: IH 90 to STH 60 East in Rock, Jefferson, and Dodge Counties was published February 18, 2004, by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP #2601). The AIS was prepared to assess the potential environmental consequences of the Preferred Alternative on the nearby farm operations. In accordance with standard AIS procedure, copies of the completed AIS were sent to all farm operators in the project corridor.

Appendix C contains an Executive Summary of the AIS. A copy of the full AIS is available at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation District 1 office, 2101 Wright Street, Madison, WI 53704.

Minor alignment shifts of the Preferred Alternative within the South, Central, and North segments of STH 26 were made to further reduce overall environmental impacts. The alignment adjustments result in slight differences between impacted farmland acreages reported in the AIS and the EIS.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has prepared this agricultural impact statement (AIS) in accordance with §32.035, *Wisconsin Statutes*. The AIS is an informational and advisory document that describes and analyzes the potential effects of the project on farm operations and agricultural resources, but cannot stop a project.

Proposed Project

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is proposing to reconstruct State Trunk Highway (STH) 26 from Interstate Highway (IH) 90 near Janesville to STH 60 East in Dodge County. This project will include a by0ass east of Milton, a bypass west of Jefferson, and a bypass west of Watertown. In areas between these communities where construction will follow the existing alignment, STH 26 will be rebuilt as a four-lane divided highway. The proposed project will convert an estimated 1,385 acres of farmland to highway purposes. This is equivalent to 6.1 average sized Wisconsin farms.

WisDOT has divided the proposed project into three segments. The South Segment runs from IH 90 to the Fort Atkinson Bypass and includes the Milton Bypass. The Central Segment extends from Fort Atkinson to Johnson Creek and includes the Jefferson Bypass, and the North Segment runs from Johnson Creek to STH 60 East and includes the Watertown Bypass. The following table summarizes some of the impacts that the proposed project will have on agriculture.

	Segments		
	South	**Central**	**North**
Acres of Farmland to be Acquired	308.8	403.7	672.3
Number of Farms Affected	38	30	100
Number of Farms with Buildings to be Acquired	2	1	3
Number of Farms Severed	8	7	13
Number of Drainage Districts Affected	0	1	1
Year When Acquisitions Begin	2010 or 2011	2006	2008
Year When Construction Begins	2012 or 2013	2008	2010

WisDOT is proposing this project in order to remove truck traffic from the downtown areas of the three communities that will be bypassed. It also anticipates that the proposed changes will improve safety and expand the capacity of the highway network in the area. WisDOT considered several alternative alignments for each of the segments.

The three counties to be affected by this project: Rock, Jefferson, and Dodge, are all large producers of soybeans and corn for grain. However, the amount of farmland in each of the counties declined between 1987 and 1997. During that period, the amount of Rock County farmland declined by 1.9 percent, the amount of Jefferson County farmland declined by 5.5 percent, and the amount of Dodge County farmland declined by 10.3 percent. Statewide, the

amount of land in farms declined by 10.2 percent during this same period. 1997 date is the most recent available from the *Census of Agriculture*.

Direct Impacts on Farm Resources

Many of the soils that will be affected by the construction of the highway are prime farmland. In Rock and Jefferson Counties, all of the towns within which the project is located have adopted exclusive agricultural zoning ordinances. The affected towns in Dodge County allow farmland owners to participate in the Farmland Preservation program through signed agreements. Both the Farmland Preservation Agreements and exclusive agricultural zoning provide tax credits to farmland owners who maintain their property in farming.

The bypass portion of the project will sever 28 farm properties. Severances can have several negative impacts on farms including creating a barrier to farming that impedes access, leaving irregularly shaped fields, and creating unfarmable areas in the field. Farming small or irregularly shaped fields is frequently less efficient because it is more difficult to maneuver farm machinery in these fields.

Farm drainage systems will be disrupted by the proposed highway expansion. The project will cross at least two drainage districts and will be close to at least one other district. Of the 74 farmland owners who provided information about the project's potential impacts on their land, 37 identified drainage as a concern.

WisDOT has indicated that no access will be provided to the bypass portions of the highway except at interchanges. WisDOT is required to provide side road access to severed parcels or offer to purchase landlocked parcels. In areas where construction will follow the existing alignment, adjacent landowners will continue to have direct access to STH 26. However, where possible, access points may be combined or relocated to side roads. Safe and efficient access is extremely important to successful farm operations and 41 farmland owners identified access as a concern.

WisDOT currently anticipated acquiring buildings on six farm parcels. The highway may also impact other buildings that are located closer to the road after construction is completed. Twenty-two farmland owners also indicated that the proposed highway will affect fencing on their property and thirteen farmland owners indicated that it will affect windbreaks and trees.

In addition to these impacts, farmers may face increased competition with other farmers who want to buy or rent replacement farmland. The loss of cropland not only reduces the farmers' crop production capacity, it also reduces the amount of land available for manure spreading, which may limit the number of livestock that can be raised.

Secondary Impacts on Farm Resources

Highway expansion can also have secondary effects on farmland and farm resources. They can contribute to land use changes the can adversely affect farm productivity and investment. While direct impacts discussed earlier are parcel-specific and known with a fair degree of certainty,

Secondary impacts are not. However, the role of highway capacity expansions, in combination with other factors, can be analyzed to provide a better understanding of their potential impacts on farmland and farm operators. These potential impacts to agriculture include the following.

- accelerated conversion of farmland to accommodate urban uses
- conflicts with urban residents
- idling of farmland
- decreased capital investments in farm machinery and improvements
- decreased availability of parcels to be rented for farm uses
- shifts in farm ownership
- fragmentation of farms
- lowering of farm productivity
- shifts in the type of farming
- the loss of political influence due to fewer farmers and more relocated urban residents

The main secondary land use effect of increases in highway capacity is expansion of the commutershed. Highway expansion can reduce commuting time and increase the likelihood of accelerated urban fringe development. Highways are a necessary, but not sufficient, factor contributing to urban encroachment on farmland. That is, highway improvements allow for the expansion of the commutershed and may contribute to decentralization, but must interact with other factors for urban encroachment to take place. Some of these factors include the baseline magnitude and rate of regional growth, the existing land use regulatory regime, the willingness of commuters to travel, and the relative attractiveness of different places for residences and businesses within the impact area.

In addition, secondary induced effects on land use include potential effects on location decisions of businesses, non-profits, schools, and other public uses. Siting of these uses may be based on considerations other than cost minimization, such as customer convenience, political or administrative expediency, and other factors. Although highway improvements are unlikely to affect primary site decisions of manufacturing firms selecting a region within which to locate, they may affect the secondary location decisions for selecting new industrial and commercial sites within a subregion. When major nonresidential uses are sited in fringe areas of urban centers, possibly influenced by new highway links, over time, this can foster outward displacement of residences and residential-oriented land uses as well as ancillary or linked business sectors.

The fact that a significant share of commercial/industrial uses in the three affected counties is already in or near the STH 26 corridor makes acceleration of induced land use changes from the STH 26 expansion more likely. Most research suggests that highway improvements accelerate growth in areas that are already experiencing development pressures and where other factors are conducive to highway-induced growth.

Development pressure can be estimated using several indicators that include the following.

- population and housing trends
- the ratio of the price at which farmland is sold when diverted from farm use to the price at which farmland is sold when remaining in farm use
- trends in retail sales and commercial/industrial location
- in-migration to a region
- trends in equalized value and new construction

In general, these development trends suggest that expansion of STH 26 could result in significant secondary effects on farmland in the project area.

Bypass Impacts

The proposed STH 26 project will bypass the cities of Milton, Jefferson, and Watertown. The potential secondary land use effects of bypasses are similar to those that result from increases in highway capacity and depend on many of the same factors. Factors that influence the land use effects of bypasses include: the volume of bypass traffic and cross-route traffic; the number and spacing of interchanges; the regional context, including county population density and distance to large cities; the geographic distribution of various types of housing, housing costs, employment options, and neighborhood amenities; and the variation among local government land use regulations, services, and taxes.

Bypasses move the highway corridor further out from the existing urban areas, and depending on their configuration, may have travel inducing effects beyond those expected from a similar capacity increase along an existing corridor. Although there is little reliable data on the long-term regional impacts of highway bypass construction on the surrounding area, many argue that it will encourage outward decentralization of activities including residential, commercial, industrial, and other types. Many studies of bypass effects look only at a two to eight-year period following construction, though some experts suggest impacts may take two decades or more to be fully evident.

In the long run, this additional capacity could significantly increase regional growth rates for population, housing, and commercial and industrial employment. This type of growth will ultimately affect farmland and agricultural viability in the area. The three-county area has high quality agricultural soils and ranks near the top tier of Wisconsin counties in the market value of many agricultural commodities.

Milton Bypass

The greatest outward vector of growth from Janesville is to the northeast, where the largest peripheral commercial area is already located. Outward development pressure can be expected to increase with the introduction of the Milton Bypass. Construction of a new bypass and interchanges, in conjunction with highway capacity increases and existing travel patterns, are likely to accelerate current high rates of housing and development in the area. The town of Harmony may be a preferred site for future commercial development, while the city of Milton may be a focus for future industrial development, aided by the proposed STH 26 project.

Interchanges are a prime focus of induced development, but not the exclusive one. Such development may also occur along major cross routes or within a radius of several miles around the interchange. Based on cross-arterial traffic volumes, the STH 26/STH 59 interchange is likely to be a focal point for bypass-induced development. The close spacing of interchanges and at-grade intersection in the South Segment will generally increase the likelihood of highway-induced development. Accelerated development is also likely because of the relatively small distance between the Milton Bypass and the existing edge of urban development.

Fort Atkinson and Jefferson Bypasses

Because the existing Fort Atkinson Bypass is relatively distant from the edge of urban development, and often separated by park and environmental corridors, induced development is less likely. Since no new interchanges are planned in this area, the main short-term effect will likely be expanded commercial development focused on the existing interchanges and cross-routes.

The Jefferson Bypass is likely to accelerate commercial and industrial development primarily in the Johnson Creek area centered on the STH 26 corridor rather than the Jefferson area. Increased commercial development at the three new Jefferson interchanges is also particularly likely at USH 18, which has a high traffic volume.

The high traffic volumes at the USH 12/Fort Atkinson Bypass interchange makes it a likely site for accelerated capacity-induced development with a similar, but weaker effect, at the north and south Fort Atkinson interchanges. For the same reason, the USH 18 interchange with the Jefferson Bypass and the IH 94 interchange at Johnson Creek are likely to be focal points for accelerated development due to the STH 26 capacity expansion. Northward sewer service expansion and frontage roads planned in Johnson Creek in conjunction with the STH 26 expansion could accelerate development in the Central Segment area.

The relatively close spacing of interchanges near Fort Atkinson (about 2 mile intervals) also contributes to the likelihood of induced land use effects. However, the relatively greater distance of the Jefferson Bypass from the edge of the existing urban development, buffered in part by environmental corridors, may increase the probability of near-term impacts around this bypass, as has been the case with the Fort Atkinson Bypass.

Watertown Bypass

The largest peripheral commercial development in Watertown is along South Business 26 near the link to the new bypass and along STH 19. The Watertown Bypass may accelerate industrial and commercial land use expansion beyond the bypass near STH 19 and further north. The relatively high share of STH 26 traffic near Watertown, which has a local origin or destination, reinforces this prospect. A WisDOT study estimated that 48 percent of existing local trips would be shifted to the bypass almost immediately. This is without taking into account the longer-term induced travel and land use changes from the proposed STH 26 project. The growth in the retail pull factor in Jefferson County compared to Dodge County in the 1990s suggests a growing sales draw for Watertown from Dodge County. The proposed STH 26 project could accelerate this trend.

The new north interchange near CTH "Q" appears to have the highest cross-arterial traffic volumes making it the most likely focal point for interchange development induced by the Watertown portion of the proposed STH 26 project. In contrast to the Jefferson and Fort Atkinson Bypasses, the locus of the Watertown Bypass will be very close to the existing edge of urban development at many points. This will make accelerated land use impacts induced by the bypass expansion more likely even in the short run. However, the relatively greater distance between STH 26 interchanges planned in the North Segment will mitigate this to some degree.

Long-Term Impacts of the Proposed STH 26 Project

The proposed project will increase highway lane capacity from 100 to 200 percent over a 40-mile north/south corridor linking three counties. In the long run, this could significantly increase regional growth rates for population, housing, and commercial and industrial employment. This is tied to the role of STH 26 as a "significant regional route" for southeastern Wisconsin since it links six cities within the project area and provides connections to IH 90, STH 59, STH 106, USH 12, USH 18, IH 94, STH 19, STH 16, and STH 60. It is also tied to the major employment and public service destinations in urban centers along the corridor.

In particular, the IH 94 connection at Johnson Creek provides east/west access to Wisconsin's two largest population and employment centers: Madison and Milwaukee. The STH 26 corridor area has increased the potential to attract dual-worker households split between employment in these two metropolitan areas. It also has the ability to offer a similar benefit for dual-employment households split between corridor cities such as Janesville and Watertown. This is reinforced by the predominance of north/south commuting flows among STH 26 corridor communities.

The city of Janesville's land use plan for its northeast sector predicts an increase in "development pressure along the entire system." Because of the strong overlap in the radius of impact of the four bypasses along the project corridor combined with the increased capacity along the entire 40-mile corridor, potential long-term induced land use effects and an increase of the overall regional growth parameters due to the STH 26 expansion can be expected.

Waukesha County is the major employment growth center in southeast Wisconsin, with significant overflow for worker housing in Walworth and Washington Counties. Over time, as the Waukesha and Washington County housing markets become saturated and their already high housing prices rise, more people may seek residences in Jefferson County, which has relatively inexpensive house by comparison. The expanded STH 26 link can combine with the IH 94 link to offer a synergistic expansion of access from these major centers to a wider range of housing sites. This could increase east/west cross-border commuting to Jefferson County.

In addition, over 35 percent of Jefferson and Dodge County jobs were in manufacturing in 1999. They were among only a few Wisconsin counties for which this was the case. Their rate of manufacturing growth from 1994 to 1999 exceeded that of Waukesha County. The relatively low cost of labor in Jefferson County compared to Waukesha or Rock Counties may contribute to increased location or relocation of employers to Jefferson County. This could be encouraged by the improved regional access and convenience of the expanded corridor combined with lower

housing costs that could ease mismatches in jobs/housing locations. This in turn would result in in-migration of workers following jobs. In addition, increased cross-border commuting among the three counties is likely.

The proposed STH 26 project will have a significant effect on agriculture in the project area. The project's direct effects, such as the loss of farmland or farm structures, will make it more difficult for affected farmers to farm profitably. The proposed STH 26 project will also have secondary land use impacts, such as the loss of farmers' political influence in local land use decisions and accelerated conversion of farmland to accommodate relocated urban residents. These impacts also affect farm operations because they change the environment within which farmers must operate and they make it more difficult for them to farm.

Recommendations

The DATCP recommends the following as ways to mitigate the potential adverse impacts associated with the proposed STH 26 project.

- In order to address the possible drainage problems that may occur as a result of the project, DATCP recommends that representatives of WisDOT discuss construction plans with representatives of the Dodge, Jefferson, and Rock County Land Conservation Departments during the design process. Since the project will affect drainage districts in Jefferson and Dodge Counties, WisDOT will be required to work with both drainage boards in these counties.

- Farmers should stay involved in the design process so that drainage issues can be addressed then. If available, landowners should provide WisDOT with copies of maps or sketches showing the locations of drainage tiling.

- WisDOT should consult with landowners whose access must be altered to ensure that safe and efficient access to their property is provided.

- WisDOT should consider compensating farmers who will have to travel longer distances between parcels of their land due to severances and changes in access.

- The county conservationists should be consulted to ensure that construction proceeds in a manner that minimizes crop damage, soil compaction, and soil erosion on adjacent farmland.

- The farmland owners and operators should be given advance notice of acquisition and construction schedules so that farm activities can be adjusted accordingly. To the extent feasible, the timing of the acquisitions and construction should be coordinated with them to minimize crop damage and disruption of farm operations.

- Proactive, joint inter-municipal planning for land use along the STH 26 corridor is encouraged to help manage highway-induced growth, and minimize undesirable land use impacts.

- Inter-municipal cooperative agreements on boundaries, planning, land use regulations, and service delivery, within and across counties, should be considered for the study area. This would help ensure a level playing field for development. Inter-municipal regulations to control the rate, type, and location of development would reduce the adverse impacts to agriculture.

- Affected municipalities are encouraged to take advantage of financial aid available through the Wisconsin Department of Administration for comprehensive planning. A new "Smart Growth" law mandates local governments to develop comprehensive plans by 2010. If local governments inform residents of the potential long-term effects of the STH 26 capacity increases, the affected communities can make better decisions to mitigate potential agricultural impacts when doing comprehensive planning.

- Investments in local roads, sewer capacity, and other public infrastructure need to be considered in terms of their potential adverse secondary effects on the agricultural sector.

- The agricultural component of comprehensive plans and any revision to agricultural preservation plans certified by the DATCP should be enforced through zoning and subdivision ordinances. (See Planning for Agriculture in Wisconsin: A Guide for Communities, Nov. 2002, UW Cooperative Extension)

- Local governments should consider other potential ways to support the agricultural sector through direct marketing, town road policies, etc.